

Alpha Sprouts

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When my son took Alpha Sprouts a few years back, he was entering a program hosted by his home church. There was familiarity in the setting, he knew many of the people, and he had certainly heard the word “Alpha” from me. I had taken the course 8 years previously while pregnant with him, had helped when he was a toddler and led courses as he entered preschool. He knew my weekly “Alpha night” was an important time for me, so he was pleased for the opportunity to join me at church on Wednesday for his OWN “Alpha night”. Climbing into the car at the end of the first evening, he began counting, “Thursday...Friday...Saturday...” a finger raised with each day, until he made it to Wednesday. “Seven! Seven nights until the next Alpha Sprouts! Can’t wait!” And with that began a conversation about the time spent with friends, the fun activities and games, and the lesson discussed. It became a weekly ritual: he would count, declare impatience for the next week’s meeting, and bubble over with the experience.

I recently spoke with a participant from the last spring Alpha course, who brought her two grandsons to join in the Wednesday night HighPoint and Alpha Sprouts. The more we talked the more *she* bubbled over with praise for the experience her grandsons had. Both boys go to another church in town, so they had experience learning and talking about God, but during the Alpha Sprouts course, she noticed the questions they asked became more thoughtful and that the stories, games and activities the children participated in related to what the adults were discussing in Alpha. “We could have a conversation,” she said, “and they were eager for more.” She gave credit to the teachers for understanding children and their learning styles and for offering a variety of activities that related to the night’s lesson. “The boys left with something in their hands every week,” she told me and when she peeked in on them one evening, they were “enthralled” and “attentive.” They loved the Alpha Dude and Dudette, two special helpers unique to the Sprouts program, made friends, had fun, and, she continued, “they felt accepted.” Relating the story of my son counting down the days immediately after the end of a sprouts evening, she laughed, “mine did the same thing, and when it was over, they were sad.”

Alpha Sprouts is available to children who have a relative/guardian attending the adult Alpha course. The Celebration Supper, on September 10th, is a great way to test out an “Alpha night.” You may, as the boys did, find yourself counting the days until the course starts September 17th!